

1/14/2008 This Week in Congress

This Week in Congress

January 14, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." The 2008 legislative session begins tomorrow and many important issues await Congress' attention. I welcome you to register your opinion in a poll on my Web site about what you think the top priority for Congress should be in 2008. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

President Approves Needed Veterans Funding

Veterans received good news this week when the White House announced that President Bush would release \$3.7 billion in emergency funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Although the spending was approved by Congress in December, the funds cannot be made available without the President's approval. We need to be more reluctant to spend taxpayer dollars, but I place a high priority on our veterans. I pushed for speedy approval of this spending to improve health care services for veterans and am happy our former servicemen and women will soon begin seeing improvements in care.

As a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, I know very well the challenges our veterans face. I have heard

from veterans across the country and throughout Kansas about the need to care for those who have served our country, especially the aging veteran population and those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. This increased funding will enable the VA to provide top-notch health care, hire more claims adjudicators, improve mental health services and make other improvements to better serve our nation's veterans.

I consider this the greatest accomplishment of 2007. Our nation's soldiers and their families have made great sacrifices for our country. It is the least we can do to make sure they are taken care of once their service is complete.

Speaking at Kiowa County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting

On Saturday, I delivered the keynote address at the first ever Kiowa County Chamber of Commerce annual meeting. More than 100 people gathered at Haviland's Barclay College for the event.

Citizens from Haviland and Mullinville have passionately worked to help their Greensburg neighbors recover from the devastation of the May 4, 2007, tornado. Their efforts are making a positive difference. Roughly half of Greensburg's residents - approximately 700 people - have returned or are committed to returning to Greensburg. I am excited that the citizens of Kiowa County are capitalizing on this progress by moving forward together to create a bright future.

Thank you to Jeanette Siemens, Greensburg Economic Development Director, and her daughter Jeanine McKenna, executive director of the Emporia Chamber of Commerce, for volunteering their time and talents to this important undertaking. Congratulations to Steve Goering, Cathy Sherer, Hannah Headrick, Steve Davis, Trent Jacks, John Unruh, Steve Kirk, Dea Corns and Kim Alderfer on their election to the organization's board of directors.

The citizens of Greensburg and their neighbors are an inspiration to me and many other people. Development of the Kiowa County Chamber of Commerce demonstrates that Kansans continue to work together to create a place to call home.

Discussing the Farm Bill with House Agriculture Committee Chairman

On Friday, I had the opportunity to visit with Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee Collin Peterson about the current status of the farm bill. The House passed its version of the farm bill in July and the Senate passed its version in December of last year. Chairman Peterson brought me up to speed on the potential schedule of negotiations between House and Senate members. We also discussed some of the outstanding issues between the two versions of the legislation. A conference committee will be appointed to work out the differences between the two versions of the bill and I will be a member.

Accepting Applications for Congressional Internships

One of the great things about representing Kansans in our nation's capital is the opportunity to give college students the chance to learn firsthand about our government and serve their state through a congressional internship. I had the opportunity as a college student to be an intern in Washington, D.C., for First District Congressman Keith Sebelius. My internship opened my eyes to the possibility that I could work as a public servant to make things better for Kansas.

I am currently accepting applications for the summer 2008 term. Applications for internships in any of my four offices are due by March 3. [Click here](#) for more information about internships and the application process.

Taking Calls from Kansans on Smoky Hills Public Television Program Next Week

On Monday, January 21, I will appear on a live call-in show on Smoky Hills Public Television from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. titled "A Conversation with Jerry Moran." The show gives me an opportunity to take calls from Kansans and discuss current issues facing Congress. Viewers can call toll-free to ask me questions at 800-337-4788. Fort Hays State University Assistant Professor Chapman Rackaway will host the program and will be joined by Hays Daily News Editor and Publisher Patrick Lowry. If you are unable to watch the live show, the recorded program will be rebroadcast on Sunday, January 27 at 6:00 p.m. Consult your local cable company or local program guide to determine the public television channel in your area.

Learning about Cougar Custom Boats in Hill City

Before my Graham County tour stop in Hill City on Monday, I toured Cougar Custom Boats with owner Tony Poore and his wife, Carla. The Poore's purchased the company several years ago and moved it from Canada to Hill City. Cougar Custom Boats manufactures special order boats for individuals across the country. This company is another great example of Kansans creating economic opportunity and jobs in rural communities. Thanks to Kirk Schweitzer, Director of Graham County Economic Development Corporation, for the invitation.

Attending the Taste of Hays to Benefit the Mary Elizabeth Maternity Home

On Sunday evening, Robba and I joined our friends and community supporters Jeff and Marla Copper in attending the Taste of Hays to benefit the Mary Elizabeth Maternity Home in Hays. The Mary Elizabeth Maternity Home provides resources and support to expecting mothers. It was nice to see the good turnout and visit with many friends.

Big First Listening Tour Continues

I continued my listening tour with stops this week in Hays, Hill City, LaCrosse, Goodland, Quinter and Haviland. My tour will continue next week with several stops. They are scheduled as follows:

Monday, January 21

Reno County Tour Stop, Buhler

Time: 3:45-4:45 p.m.

Location: Buhler Grade School, Media Center, 808 N. Main St.

Tuesday, January 22

Jewell County Tour Stop, Mankato

Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Location: Community Center, Meeting Room, 214 N. High, Suite 1

Osborne County Tour Stop, Downs

Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Location: Rotary Club, United Methodist Church of Downs, Basement, 1000 N. Morgan

Wednesday, January 23

Mitchell County Tour Stop, Beloit

Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Location: Lions Club, North Central Kansas Technical College, Student Union Conference Room, 3033 US Highway 24

Lincoln County Tour Stop, Lincoln

Time: 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: Finch Theater, Community Room, 122 E. Lincoln Ave.

Ottawa County Tour Stop, Bennington

Time: 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Location: Bennington High School Cafeteria, 301 N. Putnam

Thursday, January 24

Ellsworth County Tour Stop, Ellsworth

Time: 7:00-8:00 a.m.

Location: Kiwanis Club, Crossroads Restaurant, Highway 140 and Highway 156 Junction

Rice County Tour Stop, Bushton

Time: 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Location: Bushton Community Center, 301 N. Main St.

[Click here to stay up-to-date on stops still being scheduled.](#)

In the Office

Randall Allen of Topeka and Shannon Francis of Liberal were in with the Kansas Association of Counties to discuss health care issues facing county health departments. Amy Allison of Kansas City was in with the Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City to talk about the need for disabled individuals to have increased access to savings. Scott Deter, Tom Urban, Greg Unruh and Quentin Kubicek of Ventria Bioscience, Inc. in Junction City were in to discuss the company's processing plant and the status of its product to treat and prevent diarrhea in children.

Emily Schmeidler of Ark City and Connie Fickler of Garden City stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry